

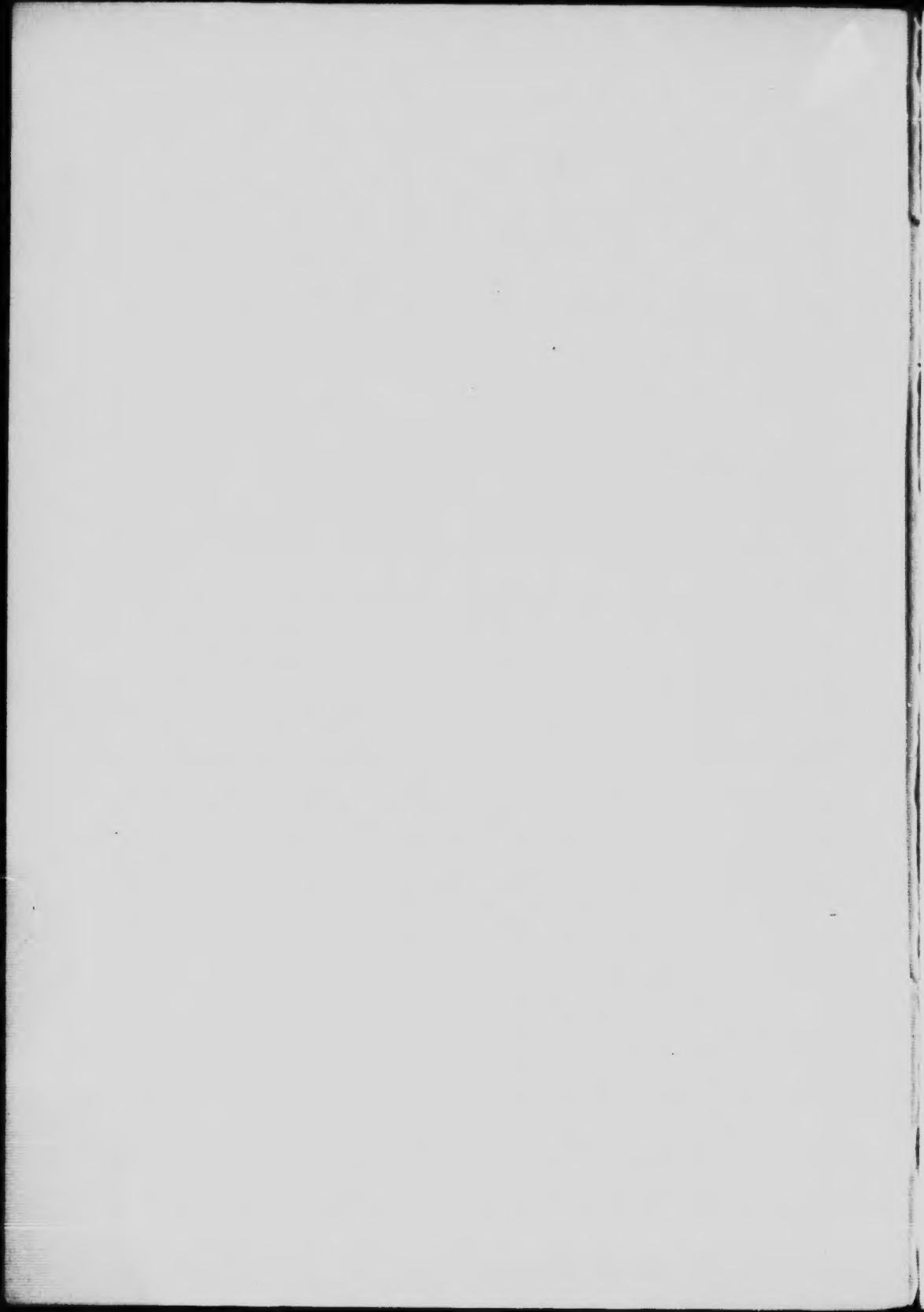
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A MANUAL *for* COMMUNICANTS

AN
INTRODUCTION TO
CHURCH
MEMBERSHIP

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FOREWORD.

For all who are Canadians, there is no Country better than Canada.

For those who love the Church, the best Institution in the world is the Christian Church.

For those who love Him, there is no Person in all the world, like Jesus the Saviour.

To live in Canada, to love the Church, to crown Christ Lord of all, in Country and in Church—there is no greater privilege or nobler ambition.

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If this little book will help some of the Youth of our Congregations and Schools to do, and to be, their best for Christ and the Church, they will help in the making of Canada and they will win the blessing of the Highest.

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SECTION I.

AN INDIVIDUAL AND ENTHUSIASTIC
ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF CHRIST.

Martin Luther was a brave and discerning soul—a courageous leader of a great emancipating movement. That he was strong, manly, and resolute can hardly be questioned.

Though naturally independent and resourceful he did not think that it was a demeaning or unbecoming thing for him to make the following confession in one of his best hymns,

“Thou canst be merciful and just,
This is my hope’s foundation;
On Thy redeeming grace I trust,
Grant me, Lord, Thy Salvation.
Shielded by Thee, I stand secure;
Thy Word is firm; Thy promise sure;
And I rely upon Thee.”

This attitude was representative of his whole renewed life. If he was a supremely great man, it was because, under God, he made so much of the Divine truths of which he sang in this hymn, and of the personal and possessive

pronouns which tell the story of a personal transaction or series of transactions between a penitent sinner on one side, and a sufficient Saviour on the other.

In the New Testament, Church Members are called by various names, such as Believers, Brethren, Christians, Saints, the Elect of God, Priests, Firstborn, Disciples, Members of Christ, and Witnesses. The latter is a most significant name. A Witness is a person who is qualified to give evidence regarding a matter, one who is able to testify to what he knows of the matter at first hand.

A witness in court is not allowed to give hearsay evidence. He must say only what he has seen and heard or is within his own personal experience. See I John 1.1. "That which *we* have *heard*, which *we* have *seen* with *our* eyes, and *our* hands have *handled*."

From John's Gospel 15.27, we learn that Jesus spoke of two works of witnessing, two witnessing on the same line, one outwardly that of the disciples, and one inwardly, that of the Holy Spirit; not two works, really, but only one.

There is nothing higher that any one can do than to bear witness to Christ. In I John 4.3, we are told that, "Any spirit which confesses or bears witness to Jesus Christ as

having come in the flesh is from Gr 1." and in the same chapter and the 15th verse that "Whosoever shall confess, (or witness), that Jesus is the Son of God, God abideth in him and he in God."

What makes the difference between true and false followers of Christ is the nature of their testimony to Him. Some take in simply and truly the Story of the Gospels concerning the marvellous and blessed life and Character of Jesus, and His complete conquest of death and the grave. They believe this record and they live by it. Such are good witnesses, they see and know within themselves. Others prefer not to believe the record; they reject it and remain in darkness and ignorance. They are incompetent witnesses.

Christ lays great stress on the value of an out-and-out confession of our faith, in other words, a ranging of ourselves on the Lord's side. He said again and again, "Every one who shall acknowledge me *before men*, him will I also acknowledge before My Father who is in Heaven. But whosoever will disown Me before men, him will I also disown before My Father who is in Heaven." (Matt. 10.32-33).

Christ here states a deep, universal law—literally it reads "Confess in Me." The idea is to witness to Christ out of a state of oneness

with Him. As if He had said "Be in Me, and being in Me, acknowledge Me." So the acknowledgment is taken out of the class of mere verbal professions. It is necessary to remember this when reference is made to the many who are Church-Members only *in name*. Those are true Members who, being one with Christ within, bear glad and enthusiastic and triumphant witness, even in the midst of suffering.

SECTION II.

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHRISTIAN
CHURCH.

Christ speaking to Peter, when in Caesarea Philippi, and after the Apostle had made a clear and courageous confession of his faith in Christ, declared that the Church, built on the rock of believing confession—that of the Company of souls believing in and on Jesus—would outlive all opposition however dark or desperate. “Upon this rock” of explicit and deliberate acknowledgment of My Messiahship I will build My Church; the powers of Hades shall not succeed against it. (Matthew 16.18).

Two lessons of the utmost importance are here taught: (1) That the secret of all stability in character is Faith in the living and life-giving Christ. (2) That the Foundation of the Christian Church is living Faith in a Living Saviour. The Church was to be constituted and continued by those who would range themselves publicly and fearlessly on the Lord's side. The main consideration to be regarded was His Character, not their's, though their's was not unimportant. Those first disciples had not come from a brilliant social

Society, they were not distinguished or cultivated or wealthy. They were only plain, humble, undistinguished, common men. But they had affection for their Leader, and a desire and purpose to stay with Him. They looked to His goodness and greatness to make them successful and useful men. And it was so that the more they looked off to Him and leaned their weakness on His power, the more effective and victorious they became.

Truthfully, then, we may sing,

“The Church’s one Foundation
Is Jesus Christ her Lord.”

SECTION III.

FITNESS FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE
CHURCH.

Many have been held back from a public acknowledgement of Christ and from a happy and fruitful Membership in His Church by a mistaken idea of their personal and persisting unfitness. They do not see that what they say of themselves, and imagine sincerely and honestly to be a disqualification, is really a state and condition of fitness. When one says, "I am not good enough to join the Church," or, "I am not fit to take a place at the Lord's Table," in one sense it is all too true. Yet the truth for the intending Communicant is well expressed in the lines of the old hymn, which the Spirit of the Lord has often blessed for the bringing of light to a soul in its perplexity:

"Let not conscience make you linger,
Nor of fitness fondly dream;
All the fitness He requireth,
Is to feel your need of Him."

It was Jesus who said 'those who are strong have no need of a physician, but those

who are ill.' Well may we ask, who, in his or her own worthiness, is fit to be named as worthy of the fellowship of the pure and holy Christ. John Henry Jowett once said, "It is not that I have to cling to the Lord, I am to permit Him to cling to me. My fingers would grow weary, they would slip from the rock, and I should tumble into the deep. But the Lord holds me, and that is my security." Whatever our need is, the complexity of the Saviour's Nature fits our complexity of need.

One way of viewing the Church is to regard it as a School. Christ the One Teacher, we the learners, slow and trying pupils, the best of us. The entrance examination is the simple but necessary condition of believing Jesus to be all in all, and joining His School in good faith. The object of the schooling is to make imperfect scholars perfect men and women—a result not reached quickly or easily.

(1) We enter this School in order that we may learn to be unselfish and sympathetic and useful.

"Come unto Me all ye who are laboring and burdened," because we carry the yoke of self. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me," said Jesus, "and I will give you rest. My

yoke is kindly (it is serviceable) and My burden is light."

(2) We join a Society whose distinguishing symbol is a Cross—the Cross of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. If anywhere, it is in the Church, that men and women sing, "Jesus keep me near the Cross." In all that He did while He was here among men, both in His passive and active obedience. He was making an atoning sacrifice for our sins. A later revision of I Peter 2.24 calls attention to the truth that, "He carried up our sins in His Body to the Tree: He bore our sins in His Body right up to the Tree."

The mission of the Church is to bring young and old, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, to know that the Son of God is their Saviour, and to help them to live obediently to the spirit of His Cross.

In no place is the music so tender, so subduing, so constraining, as where they sing, again and again and again:

"Forbid it Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ, My God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood."

Let no one imitate the posing of the Pharisee in the temple in Jerusalem who used the time for prayer in a recitation of his own fancied virtues and good deeds—probably the man less fit for the presence of the Holy One than any who were gathered there—but rather, follow the publican, who, in deep conscious unworthiness, prayed. “God be merciful to me, the sinner.”

“Yea thro’ life, death, thro’ sorrow and thro’
sinning

He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed.

Christ is the End, for Christ was the Beginning
Christ the Beginning, for the End is Christ.”

SECTION IV.

THE SACRAMENT OR ORDINANCE OF
BAPTISM.

For those who want to honor Christ and to be loyal to His Church there are two religious rites established by Divine authority. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are recognized as Christian Ordinances, by almost all Christians.

These ceremonial observances are solemn acts by which each individual is admitted to membership, or desires to make solemn profession of faith, whereby faith is stimulated, and pious dispositions excited in the recipient of Divine Grace.

(A) Infant Baptism.

In one view it is the introducing of little children into the Church.

In another view it is the application of the initiatory rite of the Christian Covenant to the children of believing parents, and is thus explained,

Baptism, which took the place of circumcision in the Old Testament, was instituted for the recognition of an existing covenant, shared in by the children of Christian parents.

As a child born in Canada is a British subject and has all the might of the British Empire behind it to guard its rights, though it knows nothing of them, and cannot claim them or make complaint, so the child of Christian parents enters into the blessings of the covenant of grace God has made with His people in Christ, through the Holy Ghost. Baptism signifies that he is already in the covenant. It is administered with the sprinkling of water, the symbol of cleansing.

Baptism does not regenerate, as some teach, it is merely the outward sign of an inward grace of which all the redeemed are partakers. Moreover, just as a child does not enter into the full possession of his rights till he comes of age, so the young Christian as soon as he comes to years of discretion and can understand what he is doing—for the religion of Jesus is one of understanding and will as well as emotion, he accepts of his own free will full membership in Christ, confessing His name in public. He enters thus into the growing possession of God's heritage, the blessings of sonship with its fuller privileges and greater responsibilities.

In yet *another* view Baptism is a form of dedication of little children to God by their

parents, both in testimony and as a vow of parental faith and purpose concerning them.

An interpretation of what child-baptism means given by a noted and much-revered theologian of the Old Land, is accepted by a large number of thoughtful persons, and may be thus stated:—All authority having been given to Christ in Heaven and on Earth, therefore His followers were to baptize and teach (Matt. 28.19-20). The time of Christ's humiliation was over and He was returning to the Father to be enthroned over all mankind as Prince and Saviour. His regal authority, and authority extending over all nations, commenced from the hour of His Ascension.

Christ has dominion from sea to sea and from the river unto the Ends of the Earth. Every Child born into the world is a subject of Christ. Christ is our King, not by our choice but by God's appointment. In Baptism Christ *claims* us as His Subjects. Baptism is the sign or seal of our personal relationship to Him. It is a revelation of the authority and Grace of Christ. In the case of a child there is nothing to impair its force or perplex its meaning. It is a declaration, solemnly and publicly made, of the child's share in the infinite

and redeeming love of God. That God can implant His own life in the heart of a child so early and so quietly as that neither the child nor the parent may not know at what moment the new life began, can scarcely be questioned. It is not a question of date or circumstance at all, but rather of the quickening touch of the Divine Spirit. A parent's prayer and faith, a Holy Spirit's energies co-operating,—the life of God in the soul, is begun and continued and perfected.

“We claim no power to change the heart
No mystic grace, new life to give;
God must the gift divine implant,
By whom our children's Spirits live.”

In presenting infants and young children for Baptism, parents renew their confession of faith in Christ; they dedicate their children to Him, and express their belief that He alone can effect for them the gracious work of which this symbol is a sign.

(B) Adult Baptism.

As to *Adult* Baptism, the most important thing is not the form or mode; what matters is that water-baptism be regarded as the sign of

spiritual baptism; a being brought into covenant relations with, and personal allegiance to, the triune God.

“Jesus with us Thou always art
Now ratify the sacred sign;
The gift unspeakable impart
And bless Thine ordinance divine.
Come Holy Spirit from on high
Baptizer of our Spirits, Thou!
The purifying grace apply,
And witness with the water now.”

SECTION V.

THE SACRAMENT OF THE LORD'S SUPPER.

The Jewish Feast of the Passover prepared the way for the Christian Feast of the Lord's Supper. Quietly, unostentatiously, the one was merged into the other. What the Passover meant, we learn from Exodus, the twelfth chapter and related passages, and a very wonderful history it is, all going to show how God delivered His people from oppression and death, with gleams also, of a coming and much greater deliverance.

Jesus on the night of His betrayal turned this feast into a new and tender Festival, to be kept in special memory of Himself. Taking bread and breaking it, He made it a symbol of his Body, "This is My Body broken for you, Do this in remembrance of Me." Taking the cup filled with wine, He made it the symbol of His shed blood, saying, "This is My Blood of the New Covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins."

This Holy Feast,

(1) Awakens thanksgiving.

Thanksgiving for the Light that showed

the Way out of the slavery of Sin. Thanksgiving for guidance given in the Way of righteousness and peace. Thanksgiving for streams which quench our deepest thirst. Thanksgiving for help that brings us, in spite of foes, to joy and rest and home.

It is well named the Eucharist—the Service of Thanksgiving.

(2) It brings to remembrance Christ and His Salvation. The Apostolic explanation given was, "As often as ye eat this Bread and drink the Cup ye *proclaim* the Lord's death till He Come."

He came to seek and to save the lost. To bring us back to God. To make it possible for all the Lord's people to have fellowship with Him in His Suffering and Joy.

(3) It offers Communion with the absolutely best Being.

We commune with Him silently and audibly. We are "made partakers of His Body and Blood," which implies spiritual nourishment and growth in Grace.

"We taste Thee, O Thou Living Bread,
And long to feast upon Thee still,
We drink of Thee, the Fountain Head,
And thirst our souls from Thee to fill."

(4) It calls to new Consecration.

We sing,

“ All that I have or am is Thine,
And Thou blest Saviour, Thou art mine.”

It is thus the renewal of a sacred Covenant. The Lord gives himself to us, as our peace and gladness and power, and we agree to give ourselves to Him to obey and serve Him. “ We love, because He first loved us.” The new and mighty motive is, “ He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities.”

(5) It points to the glad Feast above.

Reference to this festal gathering is found in Revelation, 19th Chapter, verses 7-9, “ The Marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife (the Church of Christ) hath made herself ready. Blessed are they who are bidden to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”

Till then, there are,

“ Sweet memorials till the Lord
Calls us round His heavenly board;
Some from Earth, from Glory some,
Severed only till He come.”

SECTION VI.

WORTHY AIMS AND AMBITIONS OF A
CHURCH MEMBER.

(1). To Cultivate Private Prayer.

Prayer is "The Christian's vital breath." It keeps vigorous within us our highest feelings and noblest endeavours. It sustains our ideal. By it the finite draws new strength from its infinite treasures. It preserves in us a sense of the due proportion of things. It places all our surroundings in the light of the Eternal. It is the frank and bold confession of our aim, and of our motive, under the most solemn circumstances.

Before we go out into a world of dangers and temptations we need to be protected by contact and Communion with the "Strong Son of God." All through the day we need guidance and strength, and "the upward glancing of an eye" will bring us wisdom and power. Then at eventide, after the varied experiences of the day are over, it is good to come into the presence of our Heavenly Father, to thank Him for the good things of the day, to confess our sins, and to seek the

enfolding of His peace throughout the night. It is wise and necessary to have set times and places for prayer, not only on our own behalf, but also on behalf of those who need and claim an interest in our prayers.

(2). Love of God's Word.

Above all books we should prize the Bible. Therefore our prayer should be "Open Thou mine eyes that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." How noble is the exclamation, "I rejoice at Thy Word as one that findeth great spoil," or, "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver." "In this little book," holding up a copy of the New Testament, the great Scholar Ewald said, "is contained all the wisdom of the world." Its teachings are as waters that purify, as food that nourishes, as company in loneliness, as character-moulding forces. If we search the Scriptures and apply them to ourselves, we shall find that they testify of Christ, and that they make their earnest readers "wise unto Salvation." Let every one, then, establish habits of private Bible Study.

(3). We are to aim to be Vitalized workers.

In the first days of the Christian Church every Convert was a consecrated and aggressive agent for the Lord; living in direct communication with Divine power. We are familiar more or less with what an intense devotion will do, in a number of the departments of human effort. What will "a live politician" not do to attain his ends? Yet many are so inconsistent and unfair! In the institution we call Political Government, how would it be if man after man said, "I will not belong to any political party or group. I will hold myself aloof from them all, and will manifest no interest in governmental affairs." What would that mean but Anarchy—the absence of all good government. Yet there are many who hold aloof from all the Churches, and bring forward the imperfections of Church Members as their reason. Is not the principle as vicious in the one case as it is in the other? It cannot but be admitted that Christianity has done great things in the World, and that it has expressed itself, mainly through the Church, as an organ, or instrument. While then we may see and lament the failures and manifold imperfections which mark the history of the Church, let us not be unwilling to believe that it has proved to be in many, ways, an inspiring and conquering brotherhood.

There are newspaper Editorials, and

magazine articles, and books which contain bitter arraignments of the Church, characterizations of it as being only a stumbling block, a thing of bondage and blight, breeding hypocrites and bigots and tyrants.

Be it ours to give time, and thought, and money, and strength—an eager faith and ready responsiveness to the movements of the Spirit of God, that the Church may be pure, and more consecrated, giving clearer and more emphatic witness to great facts and principles, until the whole earth shall be literally “a House of God,” and “everything in His Temple, saying Glory.”

(4). We should aim to be cheerful givers.

This is a free, lovely impulse to encourage.

Everyone has some talent, some precious thing with which to do business for God. This is a trust reposed in us. Each one is a trustee, acting for God and accountable to Him. We are therefore to live, and to give, so that we can render an account with joy and not with grief. We are told that “God loves a *cheerful* giver.” Whatever we do, whatever we give, is to be done and given *freely* and *gladly*. It is in this spirit that we please and glorify God.

In maintaining the work of the local Church, and in sending abroad the Gospel to

those who have it not, every member is called to act on the principle of personal responsibility.

Young people should see to it that they practice tithing, the giving of one tenth of their income to the Lord's work. It is an excellent thing to give methodically and regularly. With increasing prosperity, an increased amount will be given. To look into the records of good and great giving, is to learn how prosperity invariably came to the givers who adopted the Scriptural plan, set forth in I Cor. 16.2, "On the first day of the week let each of you put aside a sum from his weekly gains"—as the Lord's money. This practice and habit tend to cheerfulness, to gladness, to wholeheartedness in God's service. Glad giving is true living, while refusing to give is to be dedicated to gloom and death.

(5). A Christian s to hallow the Lord's Day.

To strive to observe this Day for the purposes for which it was designed, and to be faithful to the public worship of the Church is one of the distinctive marks of a Christian. Long ago Ezekiel, a prophet of the true and living God, was inspired to express the mind of the Lord in these plain words:

“ Hallow My Sabbaths and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the Lord your God.” The day marked the union of the people with God, and gave opportunity for communion with Him, and with one another. The desecration of the Lord’s Day robs humanity of a very precious boon. Every Christian is called to guard the day from the profaning practices of disloyal and designing men.

The public worship of God on His day is a matter of the highest importance. We quote here the words of a faithful servant of God,

“ Do not think it does not matter whether you are present or not. *Your empty place lowers the temperature of the service.* Days come, no doubt, when you feel disinclined to go to church. Say to yourself at such a time, “ Well, I should not go today for my own sake, but I will go for the church’s sake ; ” and God will bless you in your going, and the church through you. *But do go with a mind quieted and prepared to worship God, and to let him speak to you.* How can any act of worship interest or profit you if you have sauntered into church with your mind full of the novel you have just laid down, or if you are gossiping with your neighbour, till the minister actually says, “ Let us worship God ? ”

SECTION VI.

THE CREED OF CREEDS.

An eminent minister of the Truth has given the following expression of his personal faith. Deeming it to be a good Confession of Faith in Jesus we submit it to the readers of this Manual.

“Beyond the teaching of Jesus thought cannot go. A God better than the Father of Christ, is for men inconceivable. A diviner interpretation of human Existence than that of Christ, is unimaginable. Anything better than the Gospel, is inconceivable. A higher and a greater Spirit than Christ, is unthinkable. Christ is the highest Word and Act of God to man. Christ is the best conceivable that men can be, the best that God can do in man. He is therefore, at once, the highest revelation of God, and the sovereign example of men. He is the sufficient Saviour of the soul.”

“These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, *the Son of God*; and that believing ye *might have life through His Name*.”
John 20.31.